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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



## Tips for Feeling Better and Staying Healthy

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**<http://www.niddk.nih.gov>**



**Sponsored by the  
National Diabetes Education Program**

**A joint program of the National Institute of Health  
and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.**

# The Benefits of Controlling Diabetes for Life

Taking control of diabetes has many benefits. Keeping your blood sugar (also called blood glucose) levels in the normal range can make a big difference now and in the future.

## In the **SHORT RUN**, you will:

- Feel better.
- Stay healthy.
- Have more energy.
- Prevent the signs and symptoms of high blood sugar such as: feeling very thirsty and tired; urinating often; losing a lot of weight; having blurred vision; and having cuts or bruises that are slow to heal.

## In the **LONG RUN**, you will:

- Lower your chances of having diabetes problems such as eye disease, kidney disease, and nerve damage.
- Enjoy a better quality of life.

## An Action Plan for Blood Sugar Control

There are many steps you can take to **control your diabetes for life**. Follow this three-part action plan to get your blood sugar under control:

- 1 Know your blood sugar numbers.** Get a complete picture of your blood sugar control with the hemoglobin A<sub>1c</sub> test and the finger-stick test using a blood glucose meter.
- 2 Reach your blood sugar goal.** Make healthy lifestyle choices with the help of your health care provider.
- 3 Keep your blood sugar under control.** Create an action plan and stick with your self-care goals.

# 1

## Know Your Blood Sugar Numbers... 2 Tests to Measure Blood Sugar Control



To control your diabetes, you **must know your blood sugar numbers**. Testing your blood sugar is the only way to know whether your blood sugar is too high, too low, or just right.

**There are two different tests to measure your blood sugar:**

1. The **hemoglobin A1c test** (pronounced hē'mě-glō'bĭn A-one-C) measures your blood sugar control **over the last 3 months**. It is the **best way** to know if your blood sugar is under control.
2. A **finger-stick test** you do yourself using a blood glucose meter measures your blood sugar **at the time you test**.

You need **both** tests to get a complete picture of your blood sugar control.

### **The Hemoglobin A1c Test: The Best Test for Blood Sugar Control**

The hemoglobin A1c test is a simple lab test that shows the average amount of sugar that has been in your blood **over the last 3 months**. Your health care provider does the test by taking a small sample of your blood and sending it to a lab. The hemoglobin A1c test shows if your blood sugar is close to normal or too high. It is the **best test** for your health care provider to tell if your blood sugar is under control.

### **Hemoglobin A1c Testing Goal**

The hemoglobin A1c goal for people with diabetes is **less than 7 percent**. A change in your treatment plan is almost always needed if your test result is over 8 percent.

## The Finger-Stick Test: For Testing Your Own Blood Sugar Using a Blood Glucose Meter

A finger-stick test is a simple test you can do using a blood glucose meter to check changes in your own blood sugar. The finger-stick test tells you what your blood sugar is **at the time you test**.



Finger-stick testing using a blood glucose meter helps you see how food, physical activity, and diabetes medicine affect your blood sugar. The readings you get from these tests can help you manage your diabetes day by day or even hour by hour. Keep a record of your test results and review it with your health care provider.

### Finger-Stick Testing Blood Sugar Goal

Ideal goals for most people with diabetes when finger-stick testing using a blood glucose meter are:



Before Meals 80-120 mg/dl

At Bedtime 100-140 mg/dl

Your blood sugar goals may be different from these ideal goals. Ask your health care provider what goals are best for you.

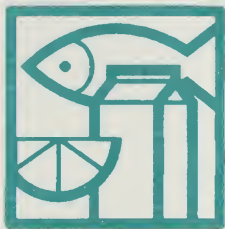
## 2 Reach Your Blood Sugar Goal... Tips to Control Blood Sugar

### To Start

- **Test your blood sugar.** Ask your health care provider when and how often.
- **Keep a record** of your blood tests, medicines, and daily events. Review the record with your health care provider.
- **Take your diabetes medicine** as prescribed.
- **Get physical activity.** If you haven't been active, start slowly. Good activities are walking and swimming.



- **Eat foods to control your blood sugar.** See a dietitian to create a meal plan that is right for you.
- **Check your feet** for cuts, blisters, red spots, and swelling. Call your health care provider right away about any sores that won't heal.



## To Keep in Mind Along the Way

- **Stay at a weight that is right for you.** Ask your health care provider what you should weigh.
- **Treat low blood sugar quickly** with special tablets or gel made of glucose.
- **Don't smoke.** Talk to your health care provider about ways to quit.
- **Learn more about diabetes and diabetes self-care.** Ask your health care provider to suggest a dietitian and a diabetes educator to help manage your diabetes.
- **Seek support from family and friends or join a diabetes support group.** Call your local hospital or health department to find a support group.

## To Do With Your Health Care Providers

- **Write down your questions** and take them with you to each visit.
- **Ask for a hemoglobin A1C test** at least twice a year and know what your test results mean.



- **Ask for regular blood pressure checks, cholesterol tests, and other blood fat tests.**
- **Have your feet, eyes, and kidneys checked** at least once a year or more often if you have problems.

- **See your dentist** at least twice a year. Tell your dentist you have diabetes.



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## 3 Create An Action Plan to Control Your Blood Sugar

**Three questions about my blood sugar control to ask my health care provider:**

1. What is my hemoglobin A<sub>1c</sub> goal? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is my blood sugar goal before meals when self-testing using a blood glucose meter? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is my blood sugar goal at bedtime when self-testing using a blood glucose meter? \_\_\_\_\_

**Three things I will work on over the next three months to control my blood sugar:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Select things that you really want to do. Here are two examples:

1. I will walk briskly around my neighborhood with a friend for 20 minutes every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 5:00 p.m.
2. I will eat the three vegetables included in my daily meal plan.

**The people who can help me do these things (e.g., friend, co-worker, health care provider):**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**My three main reasons to keep my blood sugar in a good range:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Your goals will change over time, so be ready to change your current plan or write out a new one at least every three months. Then place your action plan where you will see it often. Do it today!